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Steelwind turns heads

JACK BRESCHARD
AND ELLEN WOLFF

Before Paul Kantner rode Jefferson Airplane into cocaine grandiloquence, he enjoyed a musical friendship with a man named Jack Traylor. But while Kantner became a culture hero, Traylor settled into the life of a high school English teacher. When the Airplane's revolution for creative independence gave birth to Grunt Records, JA's San Franciscan family was extended and Jack's songs were given voice.

But those days of obscurity in Sacramento academia may turn out to have been worthwhile: Traylor emerged not only with his compositions, but also with an extraordinarily promising group of young musicians to perform them.

The album that resulted is entitled *Child of Nature*, and the billing reads Jack Traylor and Steelwind. Now, after long months of live performance, they've evolved into Steelwind, a distinctively different new band with six members sharing the billing and the spotlights. Moving beyond their first Grunt album, they are continuously evolving.

Simmering with the intensity of the Airplane at take-off, Steelwind holds too many high cards not to make an impressive bid for widespread attention. As songwriter and leader of the group's striking three-part harmony, Traylor is the axis of maturity around which the hurricane revolves. His carefully wrought folk ballads provide the templates for the searing electric music that maintains its melodic subtlety.

At the eye of the tempest is Diana Harris, who softens her bluesy, gut-wrenching vocal power (perhaps reminiscent of Janis Joplin) with a sailing, sweeping Slickness, to create a coolly sophisticated persona that is distinctively her own. When she provocatively proclaims "If I can't sell it, I'm gonna sit down on it, Ain't gonna give it away," you know her determination is authentic. Apart from her sultry solos, it is the husky essence of Diana's voice that lends the exotic spice to Steelwind harmonies.

Yet the group's ace is unquestionably the dazzling skills of a young guitarist of extraordinary potential. Even at 18, Craig Chaquico's guitar playing places him somewhere in that ageless category inhabited by only the very best. Executed at breathtaking

pace, his intricate, flowing solos scream and soar as he molds their piercingly electric edge with an intelligent wah-wah/fuzz fusion. Together with Skip Moriarity, the band's fourth high card (who laces the music with an exquisitely graceful flute), Chiquico stirs up a whirlwind of sound that pushes the passion of the music past the occasional pedagogics of the poetry.

From the synapses between Craig and Skip come the sparks that ignite the band's best moments. On "Time to Be Happy," they embroider Skip's simple love theme with a brilliant blend of churning guitar and shimmering flute that twists around the swirling voices.

Recently the band played at a Troubadour Monday night hoot before rowdy strangers, disinterested booking agents and talent reps. A shaky, nervous start lasted merely the length of a song: soon they were cooking and **everyone** was suddenly very attentive. With Skip and Craig playing their asses off and Diana and Jack swinging high and clear, they shook that unsuspecting audience, guaranteeing themselves a return LA engagement. So, this weekend (August 30 to September 2), they'll be turning more heads at the Starwood (8151 Santa Monica Blvd.).

But the nicest thing about the band—beside their music, which speaks for itself—is their manner: honest and refreshing, unspoiled by the jaded pop rock cynicism now so much in glittering vogue. They care about the music, they get off on their music and their enthusiasm is contagious.

If their development keeps pace with their ever-growing reputation (beside *Child of Nature*, Craig and Jack have been praised for their work on the last two SlickKanter albums), they could be headliners in a year's time. But because their growing pains may come in conflict with future commercial considerations—and because Traylor's fatherly influence may not prove sufficient to keep his band of prodigies content—Steelwind might easily blow away.

For the present they are an unexpected treat on this long, dry, uninspired musical summer, and we think they'll brighten any night you hear them.

Los Angeles Weekly News

WBRU-FM/Providence, R.I. -
Dick Wingate

Artist(s): Jack Traylor & Steelwind, Roger McGuinn
Place & Date: Orpheum Theater, Boston

Sound Quality and other Prod. Values: Quite good

Reviewer's Reaction: Despite the fact that Jack Traylor & Steelwind were not even listed on the bill, they managed to steal the show from Roger McGuinn. The band was super tight, much more exciting than on their album (but I love the album too), and

they mixed up selections from *Child of Nature* and new material. Diana Harris is one of the finest female vocalists I've ever heard in concert, and the stage show focuses on her. Craig Chaquico is an outstanding young guitarist, letting fly with riffs that had the audience applauding in the middle of a song. The whole band was really "on", from the hard rockers to the incredible blues that Diana stamps very much her own. An impressive performance by some real nice folk that stunned the audience and sent them home muttering.

— ACTION REVIEW —

Steals The Show From B, S, And T

By MICHAEL CASTENGERA
Journal Staff Writer

The accompanying groups on musical tours usually only end up acting as a warm-up blanket for the main group but last week's Blood, Sweat and Tears concert ended differently as Jack Traylor and Steelwind stole the show from their more famous accompanists.

The nine-member Blood, Sweat and Tears orchestra can still make beautiful music but for interest and variety, Steelwind would be my choice.

Led by Jack Traylor, who looked more like a surveyor's assistant than a musician, the group went through a jazz, blues, rock routine that made great listening. To add to the pleasure was luscious Diana Harris.

B.S.T. rolled rather than rocked in their performance — which makes music that is good for some light tripping in your own mind but is not much good for rock concerts where vitality is an important factor.

Steelwind won out with Diana Harris whose sensuous body magic and flaunting sexuality made for some good watching. She sang one song urging "girls make them say please: girls make them say thanks or don't give them anything at all."

Lead Jerry Fisher of B.S.T. was not lacking his own brand of sexuality though, as he pushed out his chest and thrust out his hips in a hand-on-hip movement which almost appeared feminine.

The best numbers in B.S.T.'s performance were "You Make Me So Very Happy," "When I Die" and "God Bless the Child." The performance of "Snow Queen" dragged badly with some people leaving the performance and others giving their own hand over mouth review.

B.S.T. also gave a demonstration of music from their new album, "No Sweat," with the songs "Empty Pages" and "Song for John." Both showed the band's move into electronic mood music.

Steelwind showed what their new "Child of Nature" album will contain — good music.

Jacksonville Times — Union,
Florida October 5, 1973



Child Of Nature
Jack Traylor and Steelwind
Grunt Records BLF-1-0194

The Bay Area of San Francisco always seems to bring forth really creative musicians as well as excellent music. Back in the sixties that city gave us Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and several other superb groups. With the first release of Steelwind it would seem that San Francisco has done it again.

Steelwind is a five member band that was created by Jack Traylor, an ex-teacher and part-time folksinger. A couple of years ago Traylor persuaded Craig Chaquico, an ex-student of his, to join him for a few club dates in the Bay area. They added a flautist and the seed that would become Steelwind was planted in the fertile San Francisco soil.

The fledgling group added Danny Virdier on bass, Diana Harris doing vocals, and Skip Morairty replacing the flautist. Recently John Bishop signed on as the drummer and now the group is complete.

Their first effort, Child Of Nature, reveals a maturity that is often lacking in the more established groups playing today. There is a perfect balance between all members of the band that creates a smooth flowing sound, unique in its simplicity and subtle power.

The music on the album reflects the tastes of the individuals in the band. Most of the songs were penned by Traylor and his folk music background is present throughout the album. His grainy vocal style and simple delivery complement the soaring ethereal quality of Ms. Harris's vocals perfectly. Chaquico's lead

guitar lends a thoughtful counterpoint to Traylor's rhythm guitar work. The melodic, delicate presence of the flute rounds out the sound and good, solid music is the result.

The songs deal with ecology, personal growth and change. Traylor creates simple, direct lyrics that stick in the mind and generate serious thought in the listener. His plaintive tone and gentle urgings create a reflective mood that is tinged with beauty and blissfulness.

"Smile" is the most powerful song on the album. It is a protest song, lamenting the warlike ways of our elders who have:

"...driven the country crazy with their glorification of war. They treat it like a football game. Watch the news for the latest score."

The song recalls the tragic waste of life in Vietnam, at Kent State, and wherever else human life was offered up to the masters of war.

"Gone To Canada" is the tale of a peaceful manchild who fled to avoid those who would make him kill for reasons he deemed immoral. It is a bitter song, filled

with the anger and frustration of those who are "men without a country."

The theme of surviving love is dealt with beautifully in "Fifteen Years After." All the pain and trauma of a relationship caught in the flux of change is captured in these few words:

"I know living with me's not easy.

Perhaps I'm not the man you thought I'd be.

And even though my life's gone down in changes,

Somehow you just keep on loving me."

Far too often bands like Steelwind get buried under the roar of louder, more commercial bands. In this case it would really be a shame. The band offers too much in the way of good music to get lost in the shuffle. After listening to the album several times I found myself humming the tunes and singing snatches of the words to myself. In my book that is the sign of a truly good band.

by Joe Gavaghan

95.5 FM Stereo 50,000 Watts
American FM Radio Network

WBRU

RESULTS OF THE 1973 WBRU PROGRAMMERS MUSIC POLL

BEST ALBUM BY A NEW ARTIST OR GROUP:

- 1) Mike Oldfield: Tubular Bells
- 2) Andy Pratt
- 3) Jack Traylor and Steelwind: Child of Nature
- 4) James Montgomery Band: First Time Out

San Mateo Times
Saturday, August 11, 1973
Peter J. Barsocchini

Jack Traylor and Steelwind—Child of Nature (BFL-0194).

Jack Traylor is a reformed high school English teacher who is carrying on some of the fine folk music traditions of the middle sixties. And he does this so well that he gets away with calling this album "Child of Nature."

Traylor and Steelwind come by way of Sacramento and were escorted by Paul Kantner and Grace Slick, of Jef-

ferson Airplane and Grunt Records. This first album is clean — the production is very nice, indeed — and catchy, with full and sometimes pretty statements by a most enjoyable group, one that still sees some hope for the world. Fancy that, a positive message coming out of Sacramento.

The instrumentation involves a lot of acoustics: guitar and flute being the staples. Craig Chaquico's lead guitar is one of the more pleasant surprises of the summer.

The singing is full-bodied and folksy, healthy sounding. "Child of Nature" and "I've Got You," offer some highly

listenable harmonies. Diana Harris, who shares lead vocals with Jack Traylor, has a voice much complemented by the flute music, and vice versa.

Looking at the picture of this group on the back cover of the album, you see a racially mixed bunch of people, of different ages (Jack Traylor is no kid), all smiling at you. This, combined with the positive feel of the album, makes for a respectable natural high. Sooner or later, by the law of averages, something good had to come out of Sacramento, and Jack Traylor and Steelwind appear to be it.



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